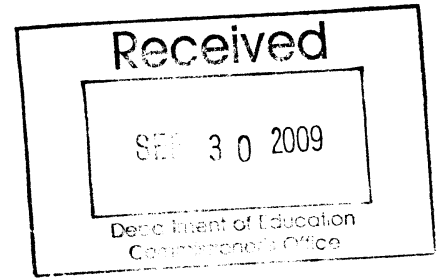


DOVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

9 Schoolhouse Road
East Dover, Vermont 05341-0300

September 21, 2009

Mr. Armado Vilaseca (and members)
Chairperson, Education Finance Summer Study Committee
c/o Vermont Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, Vt. 05620



Dear Sirs,

The Dover School Board would like to ask that the committee expand the scope of their study and not just look at how to spread the tax burden around but actually look at the cost of education.

Over the years we have seen the state try to "fix" the education system by expanding a huge untapped revenue for the state- Local Property Tax, which prior to the Bringham Decision had been for local tax purposes only.

Although we strongly believe that the Supreme Court erred in their decision, the Bringham decision said that there had to be substantially equal availability of educational opportunity. The State Legislature at that time determined that the best way to conform to this decision was to take control of the local education property tax and re-distribute it throughout the State.

At no time, with the exception of a small part of the legislation that was supposed to ensure quality education and resulted in the Action Planning of the school, has there been a serious discussion of what constitutes an education, to ensure that every student gets a "substantially equal educational opportunity".

What is included in the education that the Legislature pays for has to be identified before any other action is taken with school funding and finance.

We have always wondered why drivers education is included in our school budgets. If you read the "Vermont Driver's Manual" Commissioner Bonnie Rutledge states in her safety message "Having a license is a privilege; ..." If it is a privilege, then why are we as taxpayers forced to pay for this instruction at local schools throughout the State? Why do we have to pay a certified teacher to teach this, when school bus drivers receive instruction from an instructor on how to operate a school bus.

The Town of Bennington receives more money from the education fund than they put in (in the old days of Act 60 a receiving town). Although we do not have the exact numbers

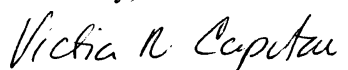
we have been told that Bennington recently spent \$60,000 on a school sign, and employs an athletic trainer at a cost of around \$70,000 per year, and has a well respected football team. We do not understand how this provides for a “substantially equal educational opportunity” when we see the local high school, Twin Valley, has to make do in a building that is over 100 years old and has water leaking into the building every time it rains and the sports teams raise money to buy new uniforms. Twin Valley towns send more to the education fund than they take in, and specifically because of this they are not able to successfully pass a bond vote to have a new school built as the voters are paying more than they can afford now.

We believe that the State should dictate the basic educational needs of schools, utilizing information that is already available, including the school standards when the Public School Approval Process was in place, the Grade Level Expectations information, and any other information, studies, or examples that the educational leaders feel is appropriate to establish this “substantially equal educational opportunity”, and that is what the State of Vermont funds. Interscholastic sports programs could be run either by the town or the school, however the only funding would have to be raised locally, not through the education fund. Any other program that a Town School District or Union School District decides that they want to include, such as drivers education, athletic trainers, an expensive sign, that money would also be raised as a local tax only.



We would ask that this letter be given to each member of the committee, as well as read into, or attached to your minutes, and that serious attention be given to this topic. How can we determine what is a “substantially equal educational opportunity” until we know what the standard is for a public education in Vermont.

Thank you for your time and we would be happy to meet with the committee at any time to discuss our thoughts on this issue.

Sincerely,



Victoria Capitani


Laura Sibilia
Traci Alfonso
Arlene Schertzer
Richard Werner

Dover School Board